



2015

Workplace Safety and Health

**Preventing
Sprains and Strains**

**Washington's Leading
Workplace Injury**



Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries

Division of Occupational Safety and Health



Preventing Sprains and Strains | Hands/Wrists

Millions of people work with computers every day, often for the majority of their workday, so it’s no surprise that sprains and strains to the wrists and hands from long-term computer use are common. These disorders typically develop over a long period of time; making

simple changes when symptoms first appear can prevent future problems. Jordan Ely, a workers’ compensation supervisor for the Department of Labor & Industries, spends a lot of his time at the computer each day. He uses a sit-stand desk that allows him to change positions and

adjust his posture throughout the day. He also holds his hands in a “neutral position,” with his wrists relaxed and straight while he works, not bent up, down or to the side.

DECEMBER 2014						
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FEBRUARY 2015						
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JANUARY 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Year's Day	2	3
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	20	21	22	23	24
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Request an assessment to ensure that your workstation setup fits you well.

2. Change your posture frequently by adjusting your chair or using a sit/stand desk.
3. Build more whole-body movement such as walking, stretching or yoga into your day.

4. Use both of your hands equally at the computer. If you tend to do a lot with your right hand, consider moving the mouse over to the left of the keyboard.
5. Set break reminders on your computer if you tend to lose track of time when you’re working on a project.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Necks**

Neck pain and neck injuries are common among nurses, nursing assistants and orderlies in hospitals and medical facilities. Handling patients often involves pulling and pushing with the arms outstretched, which puts strain on

the neck and shoulders. At Providence St. Peter Hospital, staff training includes safe-patient handling techniques to reduce risk of sprains and strains. In this photo, Karla Meyer, a trainer at Providence St. Peter, pretends to be

a patient, while employees Clint Webster and Aaron Hummel practice moving and transporting her safely.

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MARCH 2015						
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FEBRUARY 2015

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15	16 Presidents' Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Agriculture Safety Day Event info: www.wagovconf.org	26	27	28

Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Avoid sprains and strains by always using equipment designed to help move patients safely.

2. Ensure that equipment used to help move patients is available, accessible and used when needed.
3. Make sure wheeled equipment is well maintained to reduce the effort required to move it.

4. Regularly review your safe-patient handling program and hold regular meetings to discuss patient-handling events.
5. Take the time to adjust patient beds so that you can work without bending at the waist or reaching.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | Hands/Wrists

Grocery workers may handle thousands of items each day to check groceries, stock shelves and freezers, decorate baked goods, arrange produce and prepare meats. These types of repetitive tasks are a risk factor for

hand and wrist injuries in the grocery industry. At Ralph's Thriftway, grocery checker Robin Audet tilts a customer's basket to easily slide items onto the scanner rather than repeatedly lift items out of a basket. This simple step

repeated throughout the day greatly reduces the strain on her wrists.

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MARCH 2015

APRIL 2015						
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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8 Daylight Savings Time Begins	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 First Day of Spring	21
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Keep hands and wrists straight as you scan and bag items.

2. Allow items on the conveyor to come to you rather than reaching for them.
3. Slide heavier items across the scanner and use both hands to bag them.

4. Establish a regular maintenance schedule for scanners; clean dirty plates and replace scratched ones.
5. Key in the code if an item fails to scan after two attempts.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Backs**

From the time it arrives at the receiving dock until it is purchased by customers, merchandise moves through different sectors of the store. Retail workers are kept busy unloading and organizing the incoming

merchandise and placing it on the shelves and in the in-store displays. Lifting is a necessary part of retail store work, so it's important to take steps to prevent back sprains and strains. For example, use mechanical lifting

devices whenever possible and always use proper lifting techniques. In this photo, ShopKo employee Mark Wittig lifts a heavy object slowly and evenly and carries the load close to his body to reduce strain on his back.

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MAY 2015							
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APRIL 2015

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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Don't lift items that are heavy or awkward; always ask for help.

2. Whenever possible, use carts, hand trucks and other equipment in place of lifting.
3. Keep items you are lifting close to you to avoid stress to your body.

4. Store heavier and frequently used items on shelves between waist and chest height to avoid bending and reaching.
5. Keep stock areas well organized and free of clutter so that you have good access to the items you need.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | Shoulders

Working in a wholesale grocery can be physically demanding due to the amount of merchandise that must be lifted and moved, or pushed and pulled on carts. Stocking also requires prolonged and repetitive reaching above shoulder height. Consequently, wholesale

workers have a higher rate of shoulder sprains and strains, such as rotator cuff injuries. One way to avoid injury is to use power equipment whenever possible. A powered pallet jack, as shown above, is designed to efficiently move large amounts of goods with little effort.

Cash & Carry manager Bob Wood is easily able to move a large shipment of boxed lettuce from the back of the store to the produce department using a powered pallet jack.

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MAY 2015

JUNE 2015						
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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3	4	5	6 Construction Safety Day Event info: www.wagovconf.org	7	8	9
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Consider using a powered pallet jack when moving heavy loads.

2. Make sure you have been properly trained on any equipment before you use it.
3. Make sure equipment you use is in good working order.

4. Make sure items on pallets or carts are not stacked too high.
5. Use carts instead of carrying items over long distances.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Elbows**

Maria Sanchez Reyes, a temporary employee of Total Employment And Management (TEAM), works at the Weyerhaeuser tree nursery in Rochester, where she is carrying a box of tree seedlings. The box is constructed

of lightweight Styrofoam to make the lifting easier. Temporary workers have a higher rate of elbow injuries due to the repetitive nature of many of the tasks they perform. Repetitive motion sprains and strains are

among the most common workplace injuries. Solutions to preventing these injuries may be as simple as varying tasks to break up the routine of activities or using tools that eliminate some of the strain.

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JUNE 2015

JULY 2015						
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21 First Day of Summer	22	23	24	25	26	27
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. When lifting boxes or crates, grip with the whole hand and wrist rather than pinching between the thumb and fingers.
2. Keep objects you lift close to your body to avoid stress on wrists and arms.
3. Avoid twisting while lifting. Move your feet instead.
4. Don't lift more than is comfortable for you.
5. Plan your work to avoid unnecessary lifting. Try not to lift the same item more than once.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Knees**

Installing plumbing, heating/air conditioning, solar panels and other equipment requires bending, kneeling and squatting – postures that are hard on the knees. Overuse injuries, those that develop over time as a result of repeated actions or wear and tear, are common in

these occupations. Employers and workers need to be aware of this risk and take steps to protect the knees. When possible, raise work up off the floor to eliminate kneeling and squatting or use a rolling stool instead of crawling. Jesse Channel, an installer for South Sound

Solar, wears knee pads, which protect and distribute pressure across a broader portion of the knee. Knee pads are especially important when working on hard or cold surfaces or where there may be sharp items or edges.

JUNE 2015

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JULY 2015

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. To protect your knees from injury, consider wearing knee pads.

2. Use tool extensions for high and low work.
3. Use power tools to make repetitive tasks easier and faster.

4. Change posture as frequently as your work allows.
5. If you can, sit on a low stool instead of kneeling or squatting.

6. Take breaks when possible.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Necks**

Hotel housekeepers like Kathy Crandall at the Yelm Prairie Hotel work hard to keep hotel rooms looking spotless from top to bottom. Many of the hotel luxuries that patrons have come to expect make the work even harder. Luxurious mattresses are heavy and cumbersome and

traditional bed-making techniques require more lifting and tucking. Space limitations may require workers to use uncomfortable positions when cleaning. Housekeeping is one of the top 15 occupations for work-related sprains and strains and accounts for one of the highest rates

of neck injuries in Washington State. A well-designed workplace and proper tools help eliminate unnecessary strain, and proper training helps workers develop healthy and productive work habits.

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AUGUST 2015

SEPTEMBER 2015						
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Plan workload so that the heavier jobs are done early in the shift, rather than at the end when fatigue is at its maximum.

2. Position yourself so that your work is in front of you to avoid twisting or reaching.
3. Use extension tools when cleaning floors, walls, windows, and bathroom fixtures to reduce bending and over-stretching.

4. Wear slip-resistant shoes to prevent falling on wet floors.
5. Make sure you have enough light to see what you're working on without having to get into awkward positions.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Shoulders**

Aerospace is a major industry in Washington State, with thousands of companies manufacturing parts and products for airplanes. Much of the work is strenuous and repetitive – two risk factors for sprains and strains.

Many companies use ergonomic solutions to plan the workflow in a way that reduces the risk of sprains and strains. At Aerospace Product and Parts Manufacturing, Don Okamoto prepares a crate of parts for shipping. The

work surface is raised to waist level, allowing him to work comfortably with less risk of strain on the shoulders and back.

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OCTOBER 2015						
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SEPTEMBER 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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6	7 Labor Day	8	9	10	11	12
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20	21	22	23 First day of Fall	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Place frequently used tools and materials close to you between waist and chest height to reduce reaching and bending.

2. Break up repetitive work with non-repetitive tasks to give your muscles a rest.
3. Use power tools to make repetitive tasks easier and faster.

4. Store tools and materials close to where they'll be used to reduce carrying and save time.
5. Reposition parts so that you can work on them with your shoulders relaxed and your elbows near your sides.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Elbows**

Construction workers like Ed Schatz may face all kinds of hazards in the course of their workday. At Mortenson Construction, workers take effective safety measures such as wearing hard hats and fall protection to protect themselves from head injuries or falls. However,

construction workers also experience a higher rate of injuries like epicondylitis, or “tennis elbow.” These injuries are often caused by repetitive motions, such as using certain tools over and over for long periods of time, often in an awkward position. Injuries of this type

are painful and can be debilitating, so it’s important for employers to identify repetitive tasks and take steps to reduce the risk.

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OCTOBER 2015

NOVEMBER 2015						
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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4	5	6	7 64th Governor's Industrial Safety and Health Conference Tacoma Event info: www.wagovconf.org	8	9	10
11	12 Columbus Day: Washington State government open	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Look for a tool that needs less force to use and a handle that fits your hand well.
2. Make sure that the tools you use are in good condition.
3. Keep your wrists as straight as possible when using tools.
4. Use power tools when possible to minimize stress on wrists, hands, and arms.
5. Keep tools in good condition to reduce vibration and the force required to use them.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Knees**

Elementary school teachers spend a lot of time moving around the classroom providing help and support to students. Especially in the early grades, classroom chairs and tables designed for small students may leave

teachers feeling they must stoop over low tables or perch on tiny chairs. Repeated squatting and kneeling down contributes to knee injuries and other types of sprains and strains. At Littlerock Elementary, teacher Rebekkah

Allen sits in a comfortable, appropriately sized chair when she reads to her students.

OCTOBER 2015

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NOVEMBER 2015

DECEMBER 2015

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8	9	10	11 Veterans Day	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Thanksgiving Day	27 Washington State government closed	28
29	30					

Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Sit in adult-sized furniture so that you're comfortable and you can get up and down easily.

2. Avoid kneeling, squatting or bending for long periods of time.
3. Take breaks often by standing up and moving around to avoid stiff muscles.

4. Make sure any chair you use is in good working condition.
5. Have students help out with picking up and cleaning so that you don't have to bend and stoop as much.



Preventing Sprains and Strains | **Backs**

Caring for the elderly in residential care facilities is physically demanding work. Residents often need assistance to walk, bathe or other daily activities. Most injuries that result in lost work days are caused by manually lifting and repositioning residents. Focusing on

preventing lifting injuries is the surest way to reduce back sprains and strains and control workers’ compensation costs. At Quality Care Adult Family Home, Patrick Santisi and caregiver Tiffany Dickinson demonstrate how to use a lift chair. The chair has a built-in lift to help residents

get into a standing position, while the caregiver offers steadying support. Using a lift-assist chair reduces strain on the caregiver and increases the resident’s feeling of comfort and independence.

NOVEMBER 2015

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JANUARY 2016

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DECEMBER 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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20	21	22 First Day of Winter	23	24	25 Christmas Day	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Weekly Safety and Health Tips

1. Use lift assist devices to avoid strains when helping residents move around.

2. Make sure lift assist devices are in proper working condition and that you’re trained on how to use them.
3. Involve the resident in the move whenever possible.

4. Assess residents before each move to make sure their status hasn’t changed.
5. Ask for help from another caregiver.

For employers

Get a free safety and health consultation. L&I consultants can help you prevent workplace injuries and illnesses and even save money on your workers’ compensation premiums. A consultant can visit at your convenience and:

- Explain the safety and health rules for your business.
- Review or help develop your required safety and health programs.
- Provide a risk assessment and offer suggestions for effectively managing claims.

Consultants will not cite you for safety or health hazards, but will give you time to fix the hazard(s)

and help you with correction options. For more information, visit www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov or call the L&I office nearest you.

For workers

Although you must follow the safety and health rules that apply to your job, everyone has the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

If you notice a safety or health hazard at your worksite, tell your employer. If your employer fails to take action, you can contact L&I. Your employer cannot discipline you or retaliate against you in any way for notifying L&I about a hazard or for filing a complaint. Learn more about your rights at www.WorkplaceRights.Lni.wa.gov (click on Complaints/Discrimination) or call 1-800-423-7233.

Free safety and health workshops

If you’re unsure how to fill out an OSHA-300 form, dread creating your own Accident Prevention Plan or aren’t certain how a respirator should fit, consider attending an L&I workshop.

L&I offers free workshops on a variety of subjects all year long at most of the agency’s 19 offices. Topics cover such hazards as lead, outdoor heat, back injuries, and falls, while other workshops discuss how to develop a safety committee, the basics of accident investigation or provide a general introduction to L&I for small businesses.

A workshop schedule is available at www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Workshops.



Workplace safety and health services at everyone’s fingertips

- **A to Z Topics:** Instant access to a wide range of topics, plus rules and research: www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ.
- **Online Training:** Courses, training kits, workshops and more. Take a look: www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Materials.
- **Online Videos:** Online safety and health videos covering many general and industry-specific topics, as well as short one-minute videos to raise awareness about everyday hazards. Find them at: www.EyeOnSafety.Info.
- **Free Publications and Posters:** Visit www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/GettingStarted/RulesRequirements for a free copy of any poster required for the workplace and other safety and health publications.
- **Rules:** Find current laws, rules and policies at www.SafetyRules.Lni.wa.gov. For emails about new rules, changes, hazard alerts and other news, sign up at www.Lni.wa.gov/Main/Listservs/SafetyStandards.asp.
- **Spanish:** Visit www.Lni.wa.gov/Spanish for L&I’s Spanish-language website. Safety videos in Spanish are at www.Videos.Lni.wa.gov under the “Videos available in Spanish” link. For posters and other publications in Spanish, go to www.Lni.wa.gov/FormPub and select “Spanish Language Documents.”

Keep Washington Safe and Working

Why are sprains and strains a BIG concern?

Sprains and strains are the most common source of employee injuries in Washington State, accounting for about 42% of all claims costs. Often referred to as work-related musculoskeletal disorders, these are painful disorders of the muscles, tendons and nerves in the back, neck, shoulder, elbow, hand/ wrist and knee. Tendonitis, bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and sciatica are some examples.

These injuries often develop over time and may be caused by forceful exertions, repetitive motions and working in awkward postures.

Paying attention to the physical demands of the job and the design of the workplace is a good place to start. With the right fit for employees and the right equipment and tools, there’s less chance of sprains and strains. Making these adjustments need not be costly, difficult or frustrating. Below are some tips to help you get started.

Seven tips to help prevent sprains and strains

1. **Use data to find problems.** Your workers’ compensation claims data, OSHA 300 logs, safety committee minutes, absenteeism records and other data can identify problem areas. Observe problem jobs and talk to employees.
2. **Focus on effective solutions.** Too often, businesses focus only on solutions like training employees, or fitness. Although important, it’s been proven that training alone isn’t very effective in reducing injuries. Changes to work practices and equipment often can eliminate or substantially reduce the risk factors for injury.

3. **Educate and involve employees.** Involving your employees in preventing sprains and strains lets them know they are part of the solution and will lead to more meaningful results.
4. **Encourage early reporting of problems.** When employees feel comfortable about coming forward with symptoms early on, you can take care of the problem before it results in an injury. The net result is less pain and suffering for the employee and considerable cost savings for your business.
5. **Don’t just throw money and equipment at the problem.** Purchasing equipment, such as a lifting device, is often a very good solution. Better yet, if you can change the method to eliminate the lift, you save money and prevent lifting injuries.
6. **Expect results, but be patient.** Investing in efficient tools and practices to prevent sprains and strains will keep workers healthy and increase productivity, quality and employee morale. However, not all results are immediate. Consider all the benefits when calculating your return, not just reduced claims costs.
7. **Ask for help.** Most problems can be solved using in-house expertise. However, a few problems may be easier to solve with a little help from someone with more experience. L&I offers one-on-one consultations with employers to find and fix hazards that cause sprains and strains and many other resources including online tips and tools and workshops. Learn more at www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/SprainsStrains.

Call the L&I Office nearest you

Workplace safety and health specialists from L&I’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) are available to assist you.

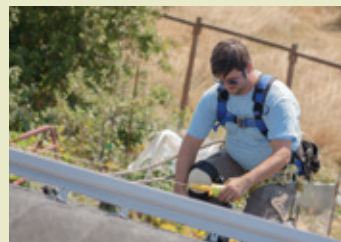
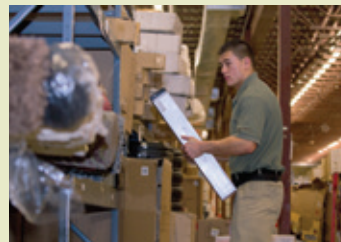
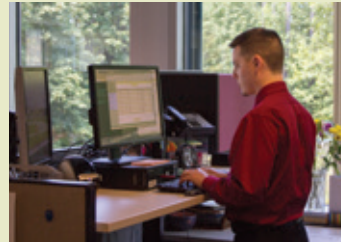
Aberdeen	360-533-8200
Bellevue	425-990-1400
Bellingham	360-647-7300
Bremerton	360-415-4000
East Wenatchee	509-886-6500 or 1-800-292-5920
Everett	425-290-1300
Kelso	360-575-6900
Kennewick	509-735-0100 or 1-800-547-9411
Moses Lake	509-764-6900 or 1-800-574-2285
Mount Vernon	360-416-3000
Port Angeles	360-417-2700
Pullman	509-334-5296 or 1-800-509-0025
Seattle	206-515-2800
Spokane	509-324-2600 or 1-800-509-8847
Tacoma	253-596-3800
Tukwila	206-835-1000
Tumwater	360-902-5799
Vancouver	360-896-2300
Yakima	509-454-3700 or 1-800-354-5423

Preventing Sprains and Strains: Washington's Leading Workplace Injury

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries would like to thank the following businesses for graciously allowing us to photograph their work sites. Featuring real Washington State businesses and employees brings home the theme of the 2015 Workplace Safety and Health Calendar, Preventing Sprains and Strains: Washington's Leading Workplace Injury.

Photo Month Company

January	L&I, Tumwater
February	Providence St. Peter Hospital, Olympia
March	Ralph's Thriftway, Olympia
April	Shopko, Olympia
May	Cash & Carry, Olympia
June	Weyerhaeuser Rochester Nursery, Rochester
July	South Sound Solar, Olympia
August	Prairie Hotel, Yelm
September	TMX Aerospace, Auburn
October	Mortenson Construction, Seattle
November	Littlerock Elementary, Littlerock
December	Quality Care Adult Family Home, Olympia
Front Cover	Cole Stormans, Ralph's Thriftway, Olympia



This calendar lists federal holidays and/or the days the federal holidays are observed in 2015.

Note: Washington State government is open on Columbus Day and closed the day after Thanksgiving.

We oriented the back cover so you can read it while the calendar is on the wall.



Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries

Division of Occupational Safety and Health

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Division of Occupational Safety and Health



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